

Child Fatality Review #08-03
Region 4
King County

This 14-year-old African American youth died from a gunshot wound.

Case Overview

This 14-year-old youth was shot to death on January 10, 2008. His body was found behind a parked car the afternoon of Friday, January 11, 2008. He was shot in the abdomen. This youth had a history of substance abuse, gang involvement, and criminal activity. This case was actively investigated by Seattle Police as a homicide.

The deceased youth was not in the custody of the Department and there was not an open case as to him at the time of his death. He had lived with several different caregivers, including his mother, maternal grandmother, and his maternal aunt. He also stayed with a cousin and his father. His four younger half-siblings were the subject of an ongoing dependency case in Juvenile Court and had been removed from the care and custody of their parents and placed with relatives pursuant to a court order. The deceased youth had been living with an aunt and uncle for a number of months prior to his death.

Referral History

On January 9, 2001, school personnel reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) that the mother had withdrawn the deceased youth from school and did not re-enroll him in another school. There was also concern about inappropriate sexual acting out. The mother did not believe the deceased youth had been sexually abused, but agreed to counseling for him. This referral was screened in for investigation by CPS for investigation of neglect. The investigation was closed with an inconclusive finding.

On March 21 2001, it was reported to CPS intake that the deceased youth made a statement during a mental health assessment that implied his grandparents had touched him in a sexual manner. This referral was screened as a Third Party referral and referred to law enforcement.

On May 11, 2001, CPS intake received a report that the deceased youth's stepfather was angry with him and made him wear a dress on the school bus. A relative saw him at the bus stop, took him to her home, changed him into boys' clothes and took him to school. This referral was accepted for investigation of emotional abuse. It was closed with an unfounded finding.

On June 11, 2001, school staff reported they found several red marks and welts on the deceased youth's arms, shoulder and legs. This referral was accepted for investigation of physical abuse and closed with an unfounded finding.

On March 29, 2004, a mental health therapist for the deceased youth called CA intake and reported she could not locate the family. She was concerned the mother was seeing the father, who was considered dangerous. However, there was documentation to confirm he was incarcerated at that time. This referral was screened as information only.

On February 26, 2007, a referral was called to CPS intake alleging lack of supervision a 3-month-old and a 3-year-old in the home of the deceased youth's aunt and uncle. The deceased youth was living with these relatives at that time. It was reported the uncle (father of the two younger children) was the primary caretaker and was not properly supervising. This referral was accepted for investigation of negligent treatment or maltreatment and closed with an unfounded finding.

On October 23, 2007, the deceased youth's aunt called CPS intake requesting help in filing an At-Risk Youth Petition (ARY) in regards to the deceased youth. She said he was on the run, was involved in an assault incident at a bus stop, and refused to return to her home. She also said he was skipping school and was involved with a gang. This referral was accepted for Family Reconciliation Services (FRS).

On October 30, 2007, staff at a Seattle area Secure Crisis Residential Center (CRC) reported to CPS intake that police brought the deceased youth to their facility after being picked up for trespassing. He had been on the run the prior four weeks. The deceased youth told CRC staff he ran away because his uncle punched him when he is in trouble. He did not have bruising and provided no further details. This referral was screened as information only.

On October 31, 2007, the assigned social worker for FRS reported he met with the deceased youth and the youth made a statement that his uncle tried to choke him, used excessive physical discipline and got drunk on the weekends. This referral was screened in for investigation of physical abuse. This investigation was unfounded.

On November 9, 2007, the deceased youth's birth father requested FRS in order to file an At-Risk Youth (ARY) petition. The father said the reasons for filing the petition were his son's criminal activities (robbery and burglary), gang involvement, drug use, aggression toward peers and possible assault on other students. It was screened accepted for FRS. The father did not respond to repeated attempts by the department to assist with the ARY petition. With no further response from the father, the FRS worker closed the case on November 29, 2007.

Issues and Recommendations

Issue: Lack of permanency for the deceased youth. Children's Administration did not file a dependency petition as to the deceased youth when petitions were filed as to the siblings.

Recommendation: A petition for the deceased youth could have helped achieve a permanent plan for him. Permanency, attachment and securely belonging to a family are protective against youth violence.

Issue: Thorough assessments of relatives to find appropriate placements.

Recommendation: A Family Team Decision Meeting (FTDM) could have helped to bring extended family to the table or at least have clearly identified them to the workers involved. Finding appropriate relatives for placement resources helps with achieving child safety, permanency and well-being.

